

## BOTTLE RACK

This is a continuation of Ser. No. 09/113,868, filed on Jul. 10, 1998, U.S. Pat. No. 6,038,784, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated as if fully set forth herein.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

## 1. Field of the Invention

This invention pertains generally to the field of infant feeding and care. More specifically, this invention relates to an improved apparatus for storing and drying infant nursing bottles, nipples and rings that is more hygienic, efficient and attractive than articles that are presently available for similar purposes, and that is more convenient to store for consumers.

## 2. Description of the Related Technology

The importance of proper hygiene when handling and cleaning infant feeding equipment such as baby bottles and nursing nipples cannot be overstated. Ideally, bottles and nipples should be thoroughly scrubbed, then sterilized by immersion in boiling water between uses. At the very least, baby bottles and components thereof, which typically include rings, nipples, hoods and disks, must be washed with an effective detergent and dried in a location that is separated from dirty water or potential contaminants prior to storage for future use.

Drying racks for holding baby bottles, rings and nipples after washing are commercially available. For example, such products are sold by Safety 1<sup>st</sup>, Inc. as a "Bottle and Nipple Drying Rack," and by Mommy's Helper, Inc. as a "Drain 'N Dry." Both of these products are characterized by a plastic tray that has a number of socket recesses defined in a top face thereof. Plastic pegs are provided that are insertable into the socket recesses. Some of the plastic pegs are relatively long, for supporting a bottle, while others are shorter, for supporting nipples, rings and caps. Neither these products nor any other drying rack of which the inventors are aware have any way of storing the disks of a baby bottle in a sanitary location after washing.

Although products of the type described above are quite useful, the lack of disk storage forces conscientious caregivers to separate baby bottle components after washing and rinsing, which can be frustrating and can result in mix-ups between disks that have been washed and unwashed disks. In addition, the sockets that are defined in the top faces of such products can collect water and become points of nucleation for bacteria and mold growth. Furthermore, assembly and disassembly of these products can be laborious, with the need to insert multiple pegs in matching sockets and having to figure out which peg to place in each socket. These products are not convenient to store for a consumer, unless they are completely disassembled. In households that have toddlers, such racks can quickly unbeknownst to the caregiver become a plaything, and pegs can be pulled from the sockets, creating more work and frustration for the caregiver, possibly presenting a risk of injury.

A need exists for a bottle rack that requires minimal or no assembly by the user, that provides a secure and sanitary drying location for all baby bottle components, that minimizes the potential for mold and bacteria growth during use and is easy to store.

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, it is an object of the invention to provide a bottle rack that requires minimal or no assembly by the user,

that provides a secure and sanitary drying location for all baby bottle components, that minimizes the potential for mold and bacteria growth during use and that is easy to store.

In order to achieve the above and other objects of the invention, an apparatus for drying and storing an article, such as a baby bottle includes a tray having a bottom face that is adapted to be supported by an underlying surface such as a counter-top, and an upper face; and a plurality of pegs extending outwardly away from the upper face, each of the pegs being sized and arranged so as to be able to support an article, such as a baby bottle, and wherein the pegs are pivotally mounted to the tray in such a manner as to be movable between a first storage position, wherein said entire peg is positioned relatively close to said upper face for storage and packaging of said apparatus, and a second, operative position, wherein the peg is positioned at a large angle with respect to the upper surface, so as to enable the peg to support an article such as a baby bottle, wherein the apparatus can conveniently be folded for packaging and storage purposes.

These and various other advantages and features of novelty that characterize the invention are pointed out with particularity in the claims annexed hereto and forming a part hereof. However, for a better understanding of the invention, its advantages, and the objects obtained by its use, reference should be made to the drawings which form a further part hereof, and to the accompanying descriptive matter, in which there is illustrated and described a preferred embodiment of the invention.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an apparatus that is constructed according to a preferred embodiment of the invention, shown in an operative position;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the apparatus of FIG. 1, shown in a storage position;

FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view taken along lines 3—3 in FIG. 1; and

FIG. 4 is a cross-sectional view taken along lines 4—4 in FIG. 1.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT(S)

Referring now to the drawings, wherein like reference numerals designate corresponding structure throughout the views, and referring in particular to FIG. 1, an apparatus 10 for drying and storing an article, such as a baby bottle, after washing and rinsing includes a tray 12 having a bottom face 14 (viewable in FIG. 3) that is adapted to be supported by an underlying surface such as a countertop. Tray 12 further has an upper face 16, as may be seen in FIGS. 1-4. Tray 12 is further configured to have a number of cutout/grip areas 58 defined in sides thereof, as may best be seen in FIG. 1. The purpose of the cutout area 58 is to permit a consumer to more easily lift the apparatus 10 during use, as well as to prevent vapor lock from occurring between the apparatus 10 and a smooth underlying surface such as a countertop. In the preferred embodiment, a cutout area 58 is positioned on each side of the apparatus 10, as well as on the rear end thereof.

As is best shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, apparatus 10 further includes a plurality of pegs 18 that extend outwardly from the upper face 16 of tray 12. Each of the pegs 18 is sized and arranged so as to be able to support an article, such as a baby bottle, after washing and rinsing.

According to one important aspect of the invention, each of the pegs 18 are permanently mounted to the tray 12 in

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